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Narrative.

Of the Adventures of the crew of the Russian-American Company's ship *St. Nikolai*, wrecked on the North west coast of America. By the Surgeons of the ship.

Our ship was bound for the coast of New Albion. On the 29th Sept, 1858 we were opposite Vancouver's Cape Flattery, in 48° 25' N. lat. We followed the coast during several days for the purpose of sketching it. The natives came out in great numbers, and sometimes we were surrounded by more than one hundred of their boats, which, although small, generally held from three or four to ten people. We never allowed more than three at a time to come on board, a caution which seemed the more necessary as they were all armed. Several of them had muskets, others had arrows pointed with stag's antlers, iron-lances without handles, and bone forks fixed on long poles; moreover, they had a species of arms made of whale-ribs, of the shape of a Turkish sabre, two inches and a half long, a quarter of an inch thick, and blunt on both edges; this weapon, we understood, they used in their night attacks, so common among these savages, killing their foes while asleep.

They offered to us sea otters, reindeer skins, and fish, for sale. For a large fish we paid them a string of blue beads a quarter of an archin long, and from five to six wershok of glass beads; but for beaver-skins they would take nothing less valuable than broadcloth.

A few days after this we had a violent storm which lasted for three days, the wind blowing from the south; at length a sudden calm ensued, but the motion of the waves continued very high. At day break the fog which had till then surrounded us, disappeared, and we saw the shore at the distance of about ten or twelve miles. The calm rendered the sails useless, and the high waves would not allow us to have recourse to the oars; the current, therefore, carried us rapidly towards the shore. We thought ourselves lost, when happily a north westerly breeze sprang up, by the help of which we got out of our perilous situation. Soon, however, a new storm arose, which was again interrupted by a calm; and at last, on the 1st of November, after much anxiety, and still more exhausting labour, our ship was cast on shore in 47° 56' N. at nearly opposite the island of Destruction. Happily the ship had run on soft ground, and during high water when the tide, therefore, had receded we found her still entire, although she had been terribly shaken, and was half full of water. There was, however, no possibility of saving her; we therefore went on shore, taking with us the guns, muskets, ammunition, and every other article which we thought we might find useful in our desolate state. Our first care when landed, was to clean and load our fire-arms, as we had every moment reason to expect a visit from the natives, against whose cupidity and savage fury we had no other security than our resolution. This being done, we made two tents with our sails, and had scarcely finished, when we saw a host of savages pouring down upon us. The mate, accompanied by four hunters, had gone on board, for the purpose of taking down the tackling from the ship. They had taken a burning match with them, there being still a few guns left in the brig. The captain, standing near her gave the necessary orders, while I had the charge of watching the motions of the enemy and guarding our little camp.

Our tent was occupied by Mrs. Bulgin (the captain's wife), an Aleutokian, from Kadjak, a woman of the same nation, myself, and two natives, who had joined us without any invitation. One of them, a teen (elder), invited me to his hut, which, he said, was not far off; but prudence restrained me from accepting this invitation. I endeavoured to inspire him with a friendly feeling towards us, and he promised that he would not injure us, and would also endeavour to prevent his countrymen from doing so. In the mean time, however, I was informed the *Kolishas** were carrying off our stores. I entreated one people to bar with them as much as possible before they proceeded to hostilities and represented to the teen the impropriety of the conduct of his party, and begged him to induce them to desist. But as we could not converse freely, it took me some time to convey my sentiments to him, and in the mean while the question was decided without our interference. Our people began to drive the savages away, and they in return pelleted them with stones. As soon as I was informed of this, I rushed out of the tent but at the same moment, our hunters fired, and I was pierced in the chest with a lance. I ran back for a musket, and on coming out again saw the man who had wounded me; he held a lance in one hand, and in the other he had a stone which he hurled at my head with such violence as to make me stagger to the ground. I fled, however, and he fell down dead. The savages soon took to flight, leaving two dead behind, and carrying one dead and a great many wounded with them. On our side there were few who had not received some hurt or other, with the exception of those who had been on board. Our captain had been stabbed in the back. A great many lances, cloaks, and hats, which strewn the field of battle, formed our trophies of this day's victory.

We spent a comfortless night, and the morning went to examine the country, with a view of finding a spot where we might winter in safety; but we found the whole of the coast covered with thick forests, and so low that at high water

it would be overflowed; it was, consequently in no way adapted for our purpose. The captain therefore collected us together, and informed us, that by next spring this Company's ship *Kadjak* would touch upon this coast, in a harbour not more than sixty-five miles distant from the spot where we then were, to which harbour he proposed that we should immediately proceed. As there was neither bay nor river marked on the chart which could impede our journey, he thought it might be very speedily accomplished; and that while the savages were engaged in plundering the vessel we should have nothing to fear from them, since they could derive no advantage from annoying us. We all, therefore, unanimously replied, "be it as you propose, we shall not disobey you."

Thus we entered upon our march, each of us armed with two muskets, one pistol, a quantity of ammunition besides three barrels of powder and some provisions which we carried with us. Previously to our departure, however, we had taken care to spike the guns, destroy the muskets, and throw them, together with the remaining gunpowder, pikas, hatchets, and other iron tools, into the sea. We crossed a river in our boat, and after advancing about twelve miles through the forest we stopped for the night, and having set our watches, passed it without being disturbed.

In the morning we continued our route, left the forest, and again approached the coast, where we halted, in order to clean our fire-arms. About two o'clock p.m. we were overtaken by two savages, one of whom was the teen who had visited us on our first landing. They gave us to understand that by following the coast we should meet with many impediments, both from its sinuities and from the rocks, of which latter they reported that some were impassable. They also showed us a beaten track through the forest, which they advised us to follow, after which they prepared to leave us. Before their departure, however, I endeavoured to give them a more formidable idea of the power of our fire-arms, by firing with a rifle at a small ring marked up on a board, at a distance of 120 feet. The ball pierced the board where I had marked it, and the savages, after having examined the aperture and measured the distance, departed.

During the night a violent storm arose, accompanied by rain and snow; and the bad weather continuing through the following day, we were obliged to wait in a cave till it was over. During all this time we were beset by the savages, who frequently rolled stones upon us from the top of the hill. The weather clearing up the next morning, we pursued our journey till we reached a stream of some depth, which we followed on a beaten path, in the hope of meeting with a shallow part where we might ford it. Towards evening we arrived at a large hut. The inhabitants had left, but a fire was still burning near it, and it contained a large supply of dried kludches (a species of salmon), and opposite to it poles were fixed in the water for the purpose of fishing. We took twenty-five of these fish, for which we left about six yards of beads by way of payment; after which we encamped for the night, about 200 yards from it in the forest.

In the morning we perceived that we were surrounded by a troop of savages, armed with lances, forks, and arrows. I went forward and fired my piece over their heads, which had the desired effect; for they immediately dispersed and hid themselves amongst the trees, and allowed us to proceed. In this manner we had continually to contend against the savages, whom we endeavoured to avoid, but who were constantly besetting us, watching for a favourable moment for annihilating us.

On the 7th of November, we met with three men and a woman, who gave us some dried fish, speaking at the same time very ill of the tribe among whom we had hitherto suffered so much, and extolling their own. They followed us till the evening, when we reached the mouth of a small river, on the opposite side of which stood a village consisting of six huts. Here they advised us to wait till high-water tide, which would come on during the night, when they would get us boats to pass us over, adding that it would not be safe to cross at low-water. We felt, however, no inclination to trust ourselves in their hands during the night, and therefore retired to some distance, where we encamped till the next morning.

When we came again to the mouth of the river we saw nearly 200 savages near the huts; but as we could obtain no answer to any of our questions respecting a passage, we proceeded upwards in search of a ford. As soon as the natives perceived our intention, they sent us a boat rowed by two men who were completely naked. As this boat could not have held above ten people at a time, he begged them to send us another, that we might all cross at the same time. They complied with our request in sending a second boat, but so small a one that not more than four persons could sit in it. It was attended by the woman whom we had met the day previous. The small boat was assigned to Mrs. Bulgin, a male and a female Aleutokian, and a youth who had been apprenticed on board the ship; whilst one of the boldest hunters embarked on the other, the others remaining on the bank. As soon as the great boat had reached the middle of the stream the savages who pulled it drew out a piece of wood which closed a hole which had been purposely made at the bottom of it, threw themselves into the water, and swam on shore. The boat was carried along by the current and came at one period so near the opposite shore, that all our people in it were wounded by the darts and arrows which the savages threw at them: but fortunately the car-

rent took an opposite direction, and they succeeded in landing on our side at the moment when the boat began to sink. Those in the small boat, however, all fell into the hands of these treacherous barbarians, who, justly supposing that the vessels which had been in the boat must have been less than the rest, now crossed over to attack us. We on our part, intruded upon them, and as circumstances would admit, after firing several shots, we were in a line opposite to their position, and began shooting their arrows at us, and once even fired muskets; luckily, however, we had a few muskets left dry, with which we ultimately succeeded in driving off our enemies, after having wounded several of them and killed two. We on our side had one man mortally wounded; and as we would not allow him to fall a victim to those barbarians, we carried him along with us; but before we had advanced one mile his sufferings became so great that he begged us to leave him to die in the forest, since our carrying him with us could not save him, and would only impede our flight; we therefore took leave of our dying companion, and proceeded onwards for some distance. At length we encamped in a convenient spot in a hilly part of the forest.

Now that our immediate danger was over, we began to reflect on our horrible situation. Our poor captain in particular, who had lost a wife whom he loved more than himself, suffered an anguish beyond description. We could not conceive whence all the savages we had seen could have come, and how they could possibly be the inhabitants of those few huts. But we afterwards learned that they had assembled from all parts of the coast for the purpose of intercepting us, and that there were amongst them above fifty of those who had made the first attack upon us on our being cast on shore. Some had come even from Cape Greiville, in 47° 21' lat.

During the 9th, 10th, and 11th, it rained incessantly, and we wandered about the hills, scarcely knowing where, but only anxious to hide ourselves from the natives, whom we dared not meet in such unfavourable weather, our fire-arms having become perfectly useless. We suffered dreadfully from hunger, and were compelled to feed, upon sponges, the roots of our bog, our furs and musket covers. At last, however, even these wretched means failed likewise, and we again approached the last mentioned river; but discovering two huts, and fearing to encounter the savages, the weather being still wet, we again retreated into the forest, where we passed the night. On the 12th, our last morsel of bread being consumed, and the quantity of sponges found not proving sufficient for sixteen men, we killed our faithful companion, a dog, and shared his flesh amongst us. Our distress had now arrived at such a pitch, that our captain resigned his command into my hands, with the approbation of the whole crew, declaring himself unable to conduct us any longer.

On the 13th the rain continued. On the 14th the weather cleared up, and we resolved to attack the two huts which we had noticed. We found them deserted by all their inmates, except a lad about thirteen years of age, who was a prisoner. This lad informed us that the owners of these huts had hastily crossed the river on not seeing our footmarks.

After taking twenty-five dried fish for each man, we again retreated to the woods. We had not proceeded far, however, when we saw one of the natives running after us, apparently with the intention of making some communication but as we were apprehensive lest he should discover our retreat, we aimed at him with our muskets, and thus forced him to retreat. We then advanced until we reached the edge of a ravine, where our party halted. I then went, with one of the hunters and an Aleutokian, to a neighbouring hill, for the purpose of reconnoitring. The hunter led the way, but he scarcely reached the summit, when I saw an arrow pierce his back. I immediately called out to the Aleutokian to draw the arrow out of the wound, but at the same moment he was wounded himself. I immediately looked round, and perceived a number of savages on a hill on the opposite side, and about twenty others running towards us with the intention of cutting us off from our comrades. The arrows fell about us like hail. I fired my rifle and wounded one of the savages in the leg, which induced the whole party to take to their heels, carrying the wounded man with them on their shoulders. The wounds of our two men proved slight; and we remained on this spot for two days, in order to recruit our strength.

Finding it impracticable to reach the harbour this season, having no means of crossing the river, we resolved to follow the stream upwards, till we should reach a convenient spot for fishing, where we intended to intercept ourselves for the winter; after which we might act according to circumstances. This march was a very laborious one, for we were frequently compelled to leave the banks of the river on account of the thick under wood and rugged precipices with which they were lined; the rain, moreover, was incessant. After several days' journey, our progress in a straight line did not exceed twenty miles. We were fatigued enough, however, to meet occasionally with some of the natives fishing in their boats on the river, who consented to sell us a few fish for beads and other trifles. At last, worn out with fatigue and hunger, we reached two huts, and necessity again compelled us to make a forced purchase of fish, as the inhabitants were almost unwilling to sell us any, alleging that the high water allowed the fish to pass over, the fence mark which they had laid across the river, and rendered their scarce.

We encamped at a short distance, and on the following morning were surprised by the arrival of two of the natives,

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who, after some general conversation, desired to know whether we were not inclined to ransom Anna (Mrs. Bulgin). Mr. B. instantly offered his last cloak, and every one of us adding some part of his clothes, we soon formed a considerable heap, which we cheerfully offered to the ransom of the unfortunate captive. But the savages, instead of having four muskets in addition, declaring that their countrymen would not part with her for a lower price. Not wishing to give them an absolute denial, we demanded that we should be allowed to see the lady before we took further steps. The savages assented, and she soon appeared, attended by a great number of them, on the opposite shore. At our request two men accompanied her in a boat, till within fifteen or twenty fathoms of us, where we again began bargaining for her. It would be in vain to attempt a description of the ensuing scene. The unfortunate couple were melted into tears, and their convulsive sobs almost deprived them of utterance. We also wept; and none but the unfeeling natives remained unmoved. The lady told her husband that she had been humanely and kindly treated, that the other prisoners were also alive, and now at the mouth of the river. In the mean time the natives persisted in their demand of four muskets; and finding us unyielding in this point, they at length carried their prisoner back again to the opposite shore, Mr. Bulgin, upon this, assuming the air of a commander, ordered me promptly to deliver up the muskets. In vain did I urge the impolicy of such an act, representing that having but one serviceable musket for each man left the giving up of so many which would be immediately employed against us would lead to our certain destruction. He persisted in his demand till the men all declared that they would not separate themselves from their muskets at any price. In this determining we all felt deeply for the distress of the poor man; but when it is considered that our lives or liberty were at stake our conduct will be judged leniently. After this sad event we pursued our journey for several days till we were suddenly stopped by a heavy fall of snow; and as there was no appearance of its melting speedily we began to clear a cut, and collect materials to build a house residing in the mean time in temporary huts. We constantly saw boats with natives on the river; and one day, a youth, the son of a Toén with two other men, landed with his canoe and paid us a visit. He told us that a hut was not far off and on our offering to send one of our men with them for the purpose of purchasing provisions they seemed highly pleased, expecting no doubt to obtain another prisoner; but in this they were disappointed; the man went with them, but the young Toén was detained as a hostage till his return. He came back empty handed, for the savages, whom he had found to the number of six men and two women would not sell him any thing. Having thus been cheated by these savages, we now detained them in a hut and dispatched six of our men, armed with muskets in their quest to the hut, whence they soon returned with all the fish they could find in it. We then made some presents to our prisoners and dismissed them. Soon after an old man brought us ninety salmon for which we paid him with copper bottoms.

A few days after this we entered upon our new habitation; it was a square hut, with sentry boxes at the angles, soon after we were again visited by the young Toén, our neighbour: we asked him to sell us some fish, but receiving no answer, we put him under arrest, declaring that he could not be released till he had furnished us with our winter store, viz. four hundred salmon, and four bladder caviar. He immediately dispatched his companions, who returned to him twice in the course of the week, holding secret conference with him. At last he asked us for a passage for his boat, which being granted, we soon saw thirteen boats, containing about seventy people of both sexes, going down the river: these people soon returned to us with the articles required. We also obtained of them a net sufficiently large to carry six persons. We then dispatched the young man, after presenting him with a spoiled musket and a few clothes.

We frequently sent our boat up the river, and wherever we found any fish in the huts, seized upon them as lawful prey. One day, when our boat was absent on one of these excursions, we had occasion to stop several boats full of salmon, who were rowing in the same direction. As soon as our boat returned, we allowed them to proceed; they desired, however, saying that as our boat had taken away their fish, they had no further business. I endeavoured to make them understand, that having been driven to this by their cruelty, we had no other resource for the preservation of our lives, than selling upon their stores. I assured them, however, that we would content ourselves with what we could find by the river, if they would leave us undisturbed for the winter, nor would we ever, in such case, send our boat downwards. This diplomatic point having agreed to, we remained undisturbed during the whole year, and in possession of abundance of food.

I was informed that the savages were gathering in large numbers at the mouth of the river, and preparing to obstruct progress along the coast in every possible manner, it was decided to build another boat, with which we might, in the spring, ascend the river as high as possible, and then turn towards the south, endeavour to reach the river (Columbia), about which the natives are less barbarous. The work was difficult, but it was executed; and we only waited for the weather to enter upon our hazardous expedition,

when an event occurred which frustrated the whole of our plan.

Mr. Bulgin resumed his command; and having embarked in our boats, we left our barrack on the 8th of February 1809, and sailed down the river. We stopped at the same spot where, the year before, Mrs. Bulgin had been produced to us. We not clearly perceived the object of our captain; but so great was our compassion for his sufferings, that we silently resigned ourselves to the dangers to which he was about to expose us.

Here we were invited by an old man, who presented us with an *ishkit* (a water tight basket made of branches), full of a species of root of which the natives brew a kind of acid liquor. He showed himself very attentive, and offered to pilot down the river, the navigation of which was rather intricate, on account of the many trees that were in it: we accepted his offer, and he acquitted himself honourably. Having reached a small island, he ordered us to come to, and he went on shore. He returned soon after, informing us that there were many people on the island, who would shoot at us if we attempted to pass; he offered, therefore, to take us through a narrow channel, where we should be safe. We had nothing left but to trust to his honour, and we were not disappointed. We reached the mouth of the river in safety, and landed on a spot opposite an Indian village. Here our guide, whose name was *Lajitjajuk*, left us, after we had presented him with a shirt, a neck cloth, and a tin medal, cast for the occasion, and which we requested him to wear as a pledge of our friendship.

Next morning we were visited by a great many natives, and among them we recognized the woman who had deceived us, and drawn Mr. B. and her companions into captivity. We immediately seized her together with a young man and, having fastened logs of wood to their feet, we declared that they should remain our prisoners till our people were restored to us. Soon after the woman's husband made his appearance, and assured us that they were not among them; having been at old to another tribe; but that he would go in search of them, and bring them to us in four days, if we would only promise not to kill his wife in the interval.

We now intrusted ourselves on a neighbouring hill; and about a week after a number of savages appeared on the opposite shore of the river, expressing a wish to enter into treaty with us. Immediately we went down to the water's edge, attended by several of our people. An elderly man, dressed in the European style, appeared as the leader of the opposite party, amongst whom was Mrs. B. She immediately told us that her female prisoner was the sister of this chief, that they were both kind people, to whom she owed the greatest obligations, and demanded that we would instantly set her at liberty. On our telling her, however, that her husband would not liberate her, unless she herself were first restored to him, she replied, to our horror and consternation, that she was very well contented to stay where she was; and at the same time advising us to deliver ourselves also to her present protectors. Their chief, she said, was a candid and honorable man, well known on this coast, who would, without the least doubt, liberate, and send us on board two vessels, now lying in the bay of St. Juan de Fuca. As to the other prisoners, she said, they were dispersed among the tribes in the vicinity.

I tried for some time to persuade her to a different determination; but finding her immovable in her resolution, I returned, and reported her answer to her husband. The poor man thought at first that I was joking, and would not believe me; but after a little consideration he fell into a complete fury, took up a musket and swore he would shoot her. But he had not gone many steps when he repented; he stopped, and bursting into tears, begged me to go by myself and try again to bring her to reason, and even to threaten that he would shoot her. I went and did as he bade me, but the woman resolutely replied: "as to death, I fear it not; I will rather die than wander with you again through the forests, where we may fall at last into the hands of some cruel tribe whilst now I live among kind and humane people; tell my husband that I despise his threats."

This cruel answer almost deprived the unfortunate and doating husband of his senses: he leaned against a tree wept bitterly. In the mean time I reflected upon his wife's word and ultimately determined to follow her advice, I communicated my resolution to my companions, who at first unanimously declared against it; but no Mr. B.'s declaring that he would follow my example, they begged to be allowed to consider till the next morning.

The morning came, and the savages appeared again, renewing their demand for the restoration of the captives. This was immediately agreed to, and at the same time Mr. Bulgin, myself, and three others of our party surrendered ourselves to their discretion. The remainder of our comrades, however, obstinately refused to follow; having taken, therefore, a hearty farewell of each other, we departed with the tribe to which we now belonged.

The next day we reached the village of the *Koonitshahati*, a tribe in the vicinity of Cape Flattery, where my host the above-named chief *Yootramuki*, had his winter residence, Mr. B. went to the master of his wife, whilst the three others fell into various hands.

The remainder of our companions attempted to reach the Island of Destruction; but foundered upon a rock, and after losing all their gunpowder, and some difficulty in escaping

with their lives. They tried, therefore, to escape, but being intercepted by another tribe, they were all taken prisoners and dispersed along the coast.

At the end of the winter, my master returned to his village near Cape Flattery, taking with him myself and Mr. B., whom he had purchased from his master, with a promise of purchasing his wife also. We lived for some time very comfortably; but afterwards our situation frequently changed; the savages sometimes selling, sometimes giving us to one another. The fate of poor Mr. and Mrs. B., who had become reconciled to each other, was truly cruel: sometimes they were united together, sometimes were separated, and in constant fear of being so for ever. At last death kindly released them; the lady died in August 1809, and in February of the following year her disconsolate husband followed her, but not to the grave, for his wife had been at her death in the hands of such a barbarian, that he would not allow her a burial, but had her exposed in the forest.

In the mean time, I passed the greater part of my captivity with the good *Yootramuki*, who treated me like a friend. These people are like children, and pleased with every trifle; I found, therefore, no difficulty in ingratiating myself with them, and the construction of a paper kite and a watchman's rattle, as read my reputation, as well as that of the Russian nation in general, far among them. As to their veneration for my abilities was carried so far, that in order the general assemblies of the Toén, it was resolved that they would hence forward consider me as one of their equals; after which I always enjoyed the same honours as my master, or any other chief. They often wondered how Bulgin, who could neither shoot birds flying nor use the hatchet, could have been their chief.

During the ensuing winter, so great a dearth of provisions ensued, that one beaver was paid for ten salmon.

With some chiefs the want was so great, that three of our countrymen took refuge with me, and my master was kind enough to support them till the next spring, when they were demanded back by their owners, and I had influence enough to ensure them immunity for their flight.

In the month of March we again removed to our summer village, where I built for myself a hut with embrasures for defence, and of so novel a construction, that the chiefs came from great distances in order to see and admire it. In the mean time, however, God had heard our prayers, and provided for our deliverance. On the 6th of May an American brig the *Lydia*, Capt. Brown visited this coast. I went on board, and found one of our companions, whom the Capt. had released near the river Columbia. This honest tar immediately offered to ransom the whole of us. The savages, who thought this a good opportunity for obtaining large quantities of European goods, made such exorbitant demands, that Capt. Brown, to cut the matter short, took one of their chiefs to his cabin, and declared that he would detain him till all the Russians were delivered up to him for a moderate price, for which several of us had already been ransomed. This proceeding had the desired effect; in less than two days he liberated thirteen of us. Seven had died during our captivity, one had been old to adjacent nation, among whom he remained, and was ransomed in 1809, by another American vessel, near the river Columbia.

On the 10th of May our vessel weighed anchor, and after touching at several points of the coast for the purpose of barter, we were safely landed on the 9th of June, at New Archangel.

Y. Z.